



The President's Daily Brief

21 November 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

21 November 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

South Vietnamese Marines north of Quang Tri City have moved close to the Cua Viet River, the last natural barrier held by the Communists south of the Demilitarized Zone. Meanwhile, North Vietnamese resupply operations in southern North Vietnam are continuing at very high levels. (Page 1)

General Torrijos is reported to have decided to maintain a firm position when ambassadorial level negotiations on the canal resume, but will also press for a top level meeting to break the impasse. (Page 2)

South Korea's new constitution, which will permit President Pak Chong-hui to rule indefinitely, will be approved today in a national referendum. (Page 3)

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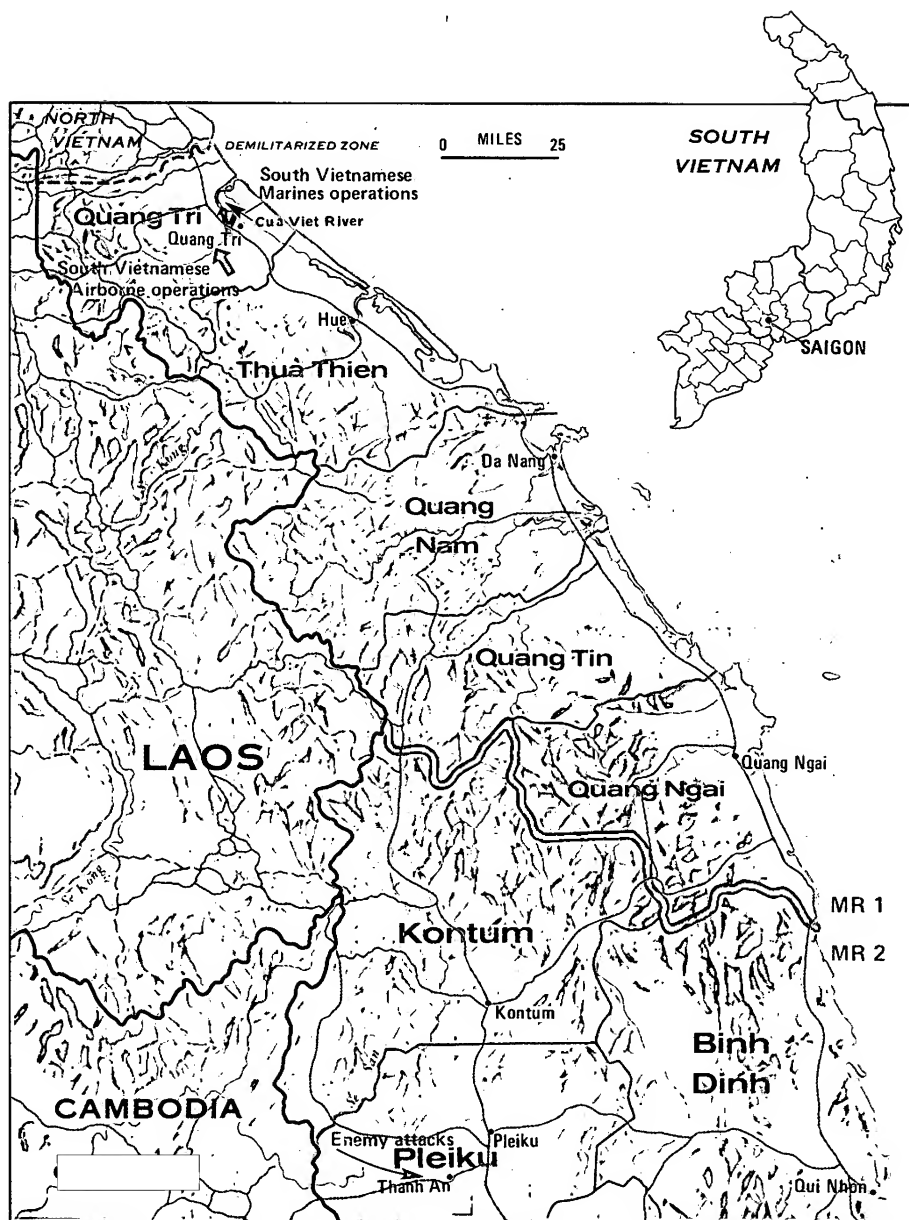
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VIETNAM

South Vietnamese Marines north of Quang Tri City have moved close to the Cua Viet River, the last natural barrier held by the Communists south of the Demilitarized Zone. Heavy rains now are hampering the Marines, however, and have slowed a South Vietnamese paratroop attack west of the provincial capital into an area that has been under enemy control since last spring.

In the central highlands, elements of a North Vietnamese division are continuing a week-old series of attacks in western Pleiku Province. On Sunday, South Vietnamese regulars west of Thanh An District capital turned back a sharp ground attack and repelled a sapper raid on a government strongpoint.

These highlands actions are similar to those mounted by the Communists against border ranger camps in Kontum and Pleiku provinces during the past several weeks. The enemy apparently is trying to eliminate any significant government presence in the highlands near the border.

Military activity in the south remains light and sporadic. The Communists continue mortar and rocket fire against scattered district and provincial cities in the delta, but none of these actions has been followed up by major ground attacks.

* * *

The partially restored rail line from Hanoi to Thanh Hoa is being used to move large quantities of supplies into southern North Vietnam. On 19 November, a major logistic headquarters in the Thanh Hoa area reported that its units would move nearly 10,000 tons of "merchandise" south between 19 and 30 November. The supplies are being transferred from rail to truck around Thanh Hoa for shipment farther south. Heavy supply activity has also been scheduled near Vinh.

Resupply operations in southern North Vietnam, which began about two months ago, are continuing at very high levels.

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PANAMA

In early November, General Torrijos, after conferring with top political and foreign policy advisers, is reported to have issued new guidelines to his Canal negotiators. These guidelines show no weakening of Panama's basic demand for complete jurisdiction and control of the Canal Zone. Torrijos, however, now wants three treaties rather than a single comprehensive document.

--One treaty would cover such issues as the timing of the cession of the present Canal to Panama and the amount of compensation Panama is to receive.

--Another agreement would concern construction of a new sea-level Canal and would provide for joint US-Panamanian ownership and management.

--The third treaty would constitute a defense agreement and would call for a large annual rent for US bases in Panama, limitations on personnel strengths, and Panamanian jurisdiction over US citizens off base.

Torrijos presumably realizes that these demands are unacceptable to the US and will not advance the ambassadorial level negotiations. He tends, in any case, to be deeply suspicious of diplomatic negotiations and is said to have remarked last week that the best way to reach an understanding with the US is for the heads of governments to work out a basic understanding and then let the diplomats handle the details. Torrijos also said that he is attempting to arrange a meeting with President Nixon.

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NOTES

South Korea: South Korea's new constitution, which will permit President Pak Chong-hui to rule indefinitely, will be approved today in a national referendum. The government has pulled out all stops to ensure a heavy vote in favor. Pockets of opposition among the intellectual and Christian communities have been thoroughly intimidated by the regime's tough application of its martial law authority. They can show their displeasure only by boycotting the referendum.

USSR-Cuba:

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Morocco: King Hassan has announced a new "government of technicians." Hassan will continue to command the military himself, and Ahmed Osman, his brother-in-law, is prime minister. The major political parties are not represented and the new government therefore will appear to the public as a continuation of Hassan's unpopular rule. Elections are promised for early next year, but the parties are not now inclined to participate.

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